

## Fiftieth Anniversary of Ordination The Rev. William Braun



Truth to tell, there was not a thing I could do but embrace a sense of calling to ministry. Trust me, I tried to escape. My pilgrimage as a pastor was, while gritty, frequently laced with grace. It is a privilege to pour life into our Lord's service. After interning in this synod, I went back to my roots in western Pennsylvania for calls to Zion's First in Ambridge and also to Saint Andrew in Moon Township. Then I returned here to Saint Luke in Devon for decades, followed by four short term roles easing into retirement. While I do trust that I am saved, my far more fervent and fond prayer is that I am spent.

The freedom and responsibility of parish life, though demanding, was dappled with delights. It made room for study and reflection I enjoyed immeasurably. Earning degrees at Yale Divinity School and Pittsburgh Theological Seminary as well as at the former

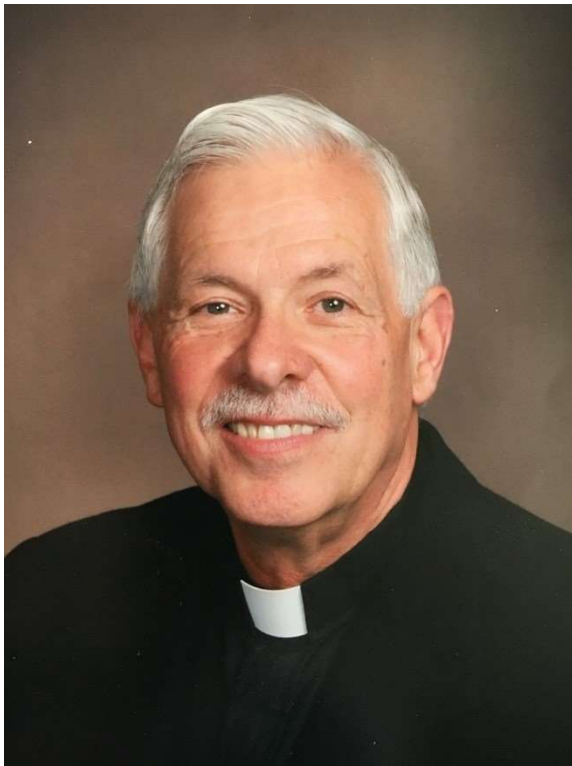
L.T.S.P. stimulated a full half century of unfinished wrestling. This revolved around what I experienced as tension between following Jesus faithfully and also effectively building up his church. Bound in this bind, my journey feels tested to this day like Jacob at the ford of Jabbok.

The image above hints at how satisfying full retirement has been. My grandson and I participated several times in the five mile Rev Run at Valley Forge. Of course, its full name is the Revolutionary Run, but I fibbed to friends viewing this photo that it was a race meant for clergy. One responded that this, then, was the most Lake Wobegonish thing he had ever encountered. Ample time to savor fun and family as well as still more study and thought has been grand. But it also makes me grapple with a sense of sinful neglect. I regret not being a more devoted partner and parent during years consumed in overcommitment to career. Peggy and I have entered our fifty-fifth year of marriage. She is easily our Lord's best blessing in my life. Together we can now enjoy our three daughters and five grandchildren. This is still another gift of grace.

All of this leads me to more compassion than encouragement for professional leaders serving now. Changes flowing from our polarized culture and from the pandemic have created a raft of fresh challenges. For me these forces tend to intensify strain between duty to the institution and devotion to the incarnation. Perhaps there can be a middle (or is it muddle?) way. I pray that all folks who wrestle like this find peace.

In *Reading Genesis*, Marilynne Robinson asserts that Jacob's defining strength was his endurance. I dare to dream that persistence in my dark struggle will yet yield some kind of dawn. Maybe it must await the final finish line. This much is clear to me: release can only be a blessing received, not a benefit achieved. Robinson's novel *Gilead* helps me process retirement. The central figure, an aging Iowa pastor, had saved every sermon except for the one he had feared to offer. Somehow this motivates me to keep crafting a story that imagines a modern person with the mind of Christ. It envisions an adventure responding to the call: "Have this mind". And it shocks. If we trust Paul that faith active in love matters most, we are led toward cultivating unbounded compassion and encouraging abundant kindness while creating beloved community.

## **Fiftieth Anniversary of Ordination The Rev. Bruce Davidson**



The Reverend Bruce Henning Davidson was ordained by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod (LCA) on May 19, 1974. The ordination service was at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Southampton, PA.

Baptized and confirmed at Redemption Lutheran Church in Northeast Philadelphia. Graduated Frankford High School in 1965. In the second graduating class of the Community College of Philadelphia (A.A. 1968.) Graduated Temple University (A.B. 1970.) Received Master of Divinity degree in 1974 from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (Now ULS). Clinical Pastoral Education at Central Islip State Hospital in New York and Internship at St John's Lutheran Church in Lindenhurst, New York

First call: Holy Trinity Wildwood NJ beginning June 1974. An amazing congregation whose mission was rooted in Christ and its seashore setting. Holy Trinity grew its welcome by sharing its space with groups of youth and adults, eventually accommodating over 30 different retreat groups a year.

Called to St. Paul's Teaneck NJ, in 1981: A multi-racial, multicultural congregation. "Blessed" with a large building the congregation began offering space free of charge to community groups and organizations. St Paul's was host to the first NA group in New Jersey, and early in the HIV/AIDS pandemic, became the home of New Jersey Buddies, the first volunteer support organization for people living with HIV/AIDS.

In 1992, called as Director of Lutheran AIDS Ministry in New Jersey: Serving half-time focused on HIV/AIDS education in congregations, and half-time as chaplain at Betak in Mt. Airy: a long-term care facility for people living with AIDS managed by the Lutheran Home in Germantown.

In 1996 called to a “transitional ministry” at St. John’s in Summit, NJ: One of two pastors helping the congregation move from a significant long-term pastorate to the calling of a new senior pastor.

In 2000, called as Director of the Lutheran Office of Governmental Ministry in New Jersey (LOGM/NJ): one of the State Public Policy Offices of the ELCA. While Director, this ministry advocated on issues of hunger, poverty, homelessness, affordable housing, immigration, and marriage equality. LOGM/NJ was active in helping end the death penalty in New Jersey: the first U.S. state to do this by legislative action.

I feel extremely blessed to have served as pastor of three congregations and in two calls to specialized ministry. I truly loved each of these varied ministries, and the many saints I came to know and journey with in the gospel!

I have to add to this brief summary that as a Gay pastor in a committed relationship, for most of my ordained ministry I was considered “out of compliance” with the standards of the ELCA. Along with others, I spoke up for the full inclusion of the LGBTQIA+ community in the life and ministry of the church. Beginning in the 1980s, I organized groups of LGBTQIA+ laity and pastors for support and advocacy. I was a voting member of the 2009 ELCA Assembly that took action to allow people in long-term, monogamous, same-sex relationships to be pastors.

In January 2011 I moved into retired life with my husband Donald Edward Barb. We have been a couple since 1983. Over the years as residents of New Jersey, we were able to become “Domestic Partners,” then entered a “Civil Union,” and finally, in 2013, we were able to marry. I thank God for this!

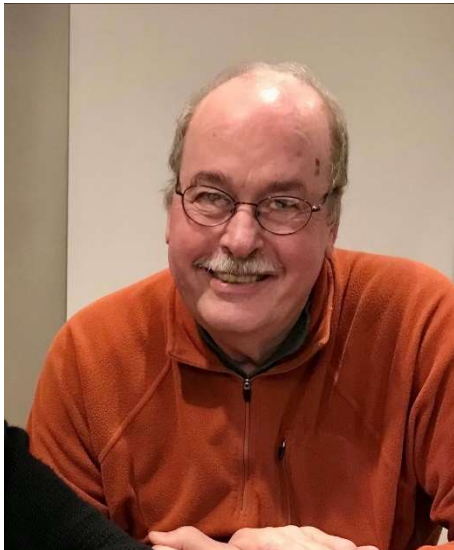
## **Fiftieth Anniversary of Ordination The Rev. L. George Detweiler**



Pastor Detweiler was born and grew up in Bucks County, PA where his first job was working on his uncle's dairy farm. After high school he attended Thiel College (B.A.), Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (M. Div.), and Princeton Theological Seminary (D. Min.). He has served pastorates in New York City (Queens and Manhattan), Connecticut, Baltimore, Wisconsin, and Ambler, Norristown, Reading, York, Camp Hill, Perkasie, Harleysville, and Philadelphia in PA. He has served both small and very large congregations, and been an intentional interim pastor for most of the last 25 years. He served UDLC as the Interim Associate in 2011-12.

A pianist and organist, he is a devotee of Bach and Mendelssohn. An avid runner and cyclist, he ran both the New York City and Boston Marathons the year he turned 50. He and his wife, Debra, have four grown children and eight grandchildren and reside outside Norristown, PA.

## **Fiftieth Anniversary of Ordination The Rev. Richard A. Olson II**



It's hard to believe it's 50 years since my Ordination in Southampton, Bucks County PA. I have been familiar with the SE Pa Synod all my life since I grew up in Lower Bucks County, attending Lutheran Churches in Pennel and Morrisville PA. I still remember my first meeting with the Southeastern PA synod's Church Vocations Committee in Center City Philadelphia when I was in 10th grade, and much later going on one day to chairing that committee.

After graduation from the Lutheran Theology Seminary in Philadelphia I enjoyed being a Parish Life And Ministry consultant for the Northeastern Pa Synod during my call at my first congregation, St. Johns, Friedensburg, Pa where I served 5 years. I then returned to SE Pa and served for 25 years at Redeemer, Jamison, Pa. My final 8 years of parish ministry was as a synod council's Redevelopment

Pastor at St. Marks, Conshohocken. (My last 3 years there being a call from the congregation).

The time I have been a Pastor taught me a great deal about life and growing in my faith. It has been an honor to serve in ministry and be fed. I am very thankful to God for His support and to my family for their encouragement as well.

## **Fiftieth Anniversary of Ordination The Rev. Dr. Robin Dale Mattison**



I am so glad to be formally part of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod in my retirement years! I have served here for 34 years, as Professor, and now Professor Emerita of Biblical Studies at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, (now United Lutheran Seminary). The Rev. Dr. John Vannorsdall welcomed me graciously to this Call in 1989 and assigned me to the New England Synod, ELCA, to expand the witness of the Seminary to all its associated Synods. I was glad to serve there through committee assignments and synodical meetings. Now, in retirement, I am glad to celebrate my 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with you all!

I began my time in this Synod worshipping at Holy Communion, Philadelphia (The Rev. Dr. Gilbert E. Doan, Pastor, whom I had known since I was the first President of the Lutheran Student Movement [1970]). I then joined our much-missed St Michael's, Germantown, (Rev. Michael Merkel, Pastor, when I joined). For many years now, I have been a member at Reformation Lutheran, Germantown, (the passionate Rev. Gordon Simmons the pastor when I joined). Now we are blessed to be led by the Rev. Anthony Scott whose first Easter with us we have just celebrated with a 10-member band!

I am sustained in retirement by the Gospel, especially as I experience it through dearly beloved former students on Facebook, including our dancing Bishop, Patricia, who was my advisee who needed no advice! I read the Bible with the same hope-filled passion I did while preaching and teaching. I give thanks always that God has been so compassionate about my weaknesses and so energetically encouraging about the gifts given to me.

My time before Philadelphia found me as a Professor at Western Theological Seminary, in Holland, Michigan (the Deutsch among the Dutch). Before that, I was Campus Pastor in Madison, WI and originally ordained (1974) to be Pastor among the dear people of Trinity Lutheran Church, Homer City, Pa.

In all these places, I found the Good News. Thus, I thank you all and all those who witnessed before you, for your work of faith, your labor of love and your steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ! (I Thess. 1:3),

## **Fiftieth Anniversary of Ordination**

### **The Rev. Eric C. Royer**



It is with joy and thanksgiving that I look back on my years in the Ministry. I thank God for all the people God used to lead, guide, prod, push, correct and encourage me along the way. At the risk of omitting some, I would very much like to recall and thank many here.

I thank my parents, Clarence and Edith, for bringing me to the font and making the church an important part of our family life. I thank the congregation of Jerusalem, Almont, for its teaching and guidance in my early years. I am particularly thankful for the ministries of the Reverends Ellsworth Grove and Robert Meschke. Unbeknownst to them, they likely planted the early seeds of my call.

I am deeply appreciative of the mentoring of several pastors who helped me clarify my call and to respond to it. First and foremost was the Reverend John Kinzel, the Lutheran chaplain at the University of Pennsylvania, who encouraged and guided me during my college years at Temple University. The Reverend Dr. John Cochran, my intern supervisor at Emanuel, South Philadelphia, whetted my appetite for and excited me about ministry in the city. The Rev. Dr. Robert Neumeyer, Director of Center City Lutheran Parish was key to making that hope a reality.

It is with thanks that surpasses my ability to express that I recall the people and staff members of the congregations that gifted me the opportunity to serve as their pastor. Immanuel, West Philadelphia, the church that may have had the greatest youth group ever, gave this young, untested pastor a try and responded to him with patience and love. From there I returned to Emanuel, South Philadelphia, my former intern parish, to serve as senior pastor in the most exciting and challenging ministry I could imagine. Next I was called to Family of God, Buckingham, then a mission congregation which grew and developed over time and gave me the gift of a 23 years of ministry together. My final call was to Ascension, Washington Crossing, a community of faith that though smaller in number was huge with love.

And through it all has been my family: Cheryl, my wife and our daughters, Allison and Justin. They loved me, supported me, and other times put up with me. Thank you dear ones.

There have been others, too, for whom I am thankful — some whose names I have forgotten and others whose names I never knew.

For them all, I say, “Thanks be to God.”